

The Web3D RoundUP lives somewhere between classical art and commerce. In the SIGGRAPH context, the RoundUP lives within the nexus between the commercial-oriented Exhibition, the bleeding-edge technology of Emerging Technologies, and the Art Gallery.

Now one of these worlds has dramatically changed the balance. As the swooping pendulum of current market conditions swings toward economic practicality, consolidation and shakeout in the Web3D industry is in process. Now that the installed computer base is actually fast enough for Web3D technologies, major software developers will move into the 3D Web. Pure content “plays” are dead. Just like everyone else, Web3D companies must now seriously start to justify themselves by carving out sustainable ways of staying in operation. Evolve or die! Signs of evolution in Web3D emerge to make real businesses out of creativity, including communications, wireless, and online gaming.

With the emergence of business-based themes that leverage the tools and talents of Web3D, mergers for survival are happening. Quietly, behind the scenes, big software companies have been acquiring enabling technologies, and they are rolling out their solutions at SIGGRAPH 2001. And looming on the horizon is a rapidly growing trend of using easy-to-create avatars (yes the once dreaded “A” word) as a communication medium, representing people across a myriad of networks and devices.

And then there is wireless. (Doesn't everyone have a wireless strategy?) Web3D's role in the emerging wireless field will be bleeding-edge, interesting, and provocative. Unlike bandwidth-clogging video, Web3D is a natural for low-bandwidth wireless networks. Now that 3D-enabled wireless devices are coming to market, depending on where you live, you can soon expect a swarm of 3D characters and applications to be playing on a mobile device near you.

And if there was ever a killer app of Web3D, it would be online gaming. Massive-player online games have revolutionized how content, technology, art (creation and asset management), and financial models are conceived.

The Web3D RoundUP, has been showing the hottest and most bleeding-edge technology for years. We've strived to spur creativity and show you the best of the best. Especially now, the Web 3D RoundUP's goal is make sure that creativity is not lost in this age of business, to help blend technology, creativity, and art in a way that benefits us all in many ways, including financial.

Web3D RoundUP must evolve as well. Prior to SIGGRAPH 2000's boisterous event, we responded to feedback that the “negative sound” devices (“moo canisters”) really didn't work that well compared to the happy “wacka wacka” sound devices. So we experimented with the rubber “razzer.” It turned out to be much more effective than anticipated. The noisemakers really created a much more raucous feedback session than we had ever seen. So we are on a quest for the perfect noisemaker: not too quiet and not too loud.

ABOUT THE WEB3D ROUNDUP

The Web3D RoundUP is a high-speed shootout that showcases the latest and very greatest interactive 3D content available over the Web. Diplomatically, we describe this as an “interactive event for interactive content.” Realistically, it can be a gut-wrenching monster. Have you ever tried doing a cool demo in less than three minutes, with the seconds ticking down on the big screen, in front of thousands of world-class graphics experts, all armed with happy/sad sound effects and ping-pong ball blasters!

Twice a year, at the annual SIGGRAPH conference and Web3D200x, the Web3D RoundUP presents the best the Web3D world has to offer in a cool and entertaining way. The challenge for jurors is to choose two dozen diverse, eye-popping selections from nine dozen submissions. The challenge for presenters is to first finish that killer demo, and then engage the audience in a fun way so that everyone can interactively participate and become part of the event itself. The challenge for the audience is to hold on without blinking during this wild ride, to shake and rattle various “interactive feedback devices” for live comment, and then vote to pick the entry in each category that deserves to receive a coveted “Golden Lasso.”

The Web3D RoundUP evolved from the early days of the Virtual Reality Education Foundation (affectionately known as VeRGe), which was created by Timothy Childs, Linda Jacobson and Peter Rothman. Another precursor was the first SIGGRAPH Demo SIG meetings organized by Don Brutzman, where the VRML community kick-started Web-based 3D graphics. It was through those early VeRGe and Demo SIG events that we got our first tastes of technically successful chaos, which morphed into today's Web3D RoundUP. Each year, we continue to grow, adapt, tumble, and evolve as presenters push the limits.

One of the things that gave the Web3D RoundUP its original kick was the oft-occurring computer crash. There seemed to be a direct correlation between a crashing computer and how bleeding-edge the demo was. Now Web3D technology is starting to stabilize (and fewer virtual fire extinguishers are needed). Even so, we're still seeking the bleeding edge.

The Web3D RoundUP became what it is today thanks to great help from all the amazing volunteers at both SIGGRAPH and Web3D conferences, as well as the solid advice and support by many SIGGRAPH chairs, staff, committee members and student volunteers. We're especially grateful and blessed to see some of the same faces return year after year to help out in the days of temporary backstage chaos as we prepare for the event. Thank you all. We are most fortunate to receive sage guidance from the world's greatest audio-visual wizards at (where else!) AVW Audio Visual. Finally, we thank the hardworking technical trapeze artists and content creators, who put in countless hours getting ready for just a few minutes of unforgettably intense glory on stage.